

# WORLD WETLANDS DAY CELEBRATION 2012

## Let's Go to See Mangroves!

Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia

12<sup>th</sup> February 2012



## **Background:**

World Wetlands Day (WWD) is celebrated internationally on 2<sup>nd</sup> February each year. It marks the date of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands, also called the Ramsar Convention, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. From 1997 to 2007, the Convention's Web site has posted reports from more than 95 countries of WWD activities of all sizes and shapes, from lectures and seminars, nature walks, children's art contests, sampan races, and community clean-up days, to radio and television interviews and letters to newspapers, to the launch of new wetland policies, new Ramsar sites, and new programmes at the national level.

Every year, there is a special theme for the WWD. The theme of WWD 2012 is *Wetlands and Tourism*, with the slogan *Wetland Tourism: A Great Experience*. Apparently, the purpose is to promote tourism in wetlands where the nature and wildlife are main attraction. As a vulnerable ecosystem, the wetland will be exposed to all kinds of threats while developing tourism. In view of that, it is vital to encourage the sustainable development of wetland tourism. Two useful approaches: sustainable tourism and ecotourism are highlighted to minimise the adverse impacts of tourism on wetlands. With the responsible way of travelling, it will definitely help supports the ecosystems as well as local communities.

## References:

- 1) [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-/main/ramsar/1-63-78\\_4000\\_0\\_\\_](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-/main/ramsar/1-63-78_4000_0__)
- 2) [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-wwds-wwd2012index/main/ramsar/1-63-78%5E25324\\_4000\\_0\\_\\_](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-wwds-wwd2012index/main/ramsar/1-63-78%5E25324_4000_0__)

**Objective:**

- 1) Increase environmental awareness particularly the importance of wetland forests among teachers, students and parents.
- 2) Promote conservation of wetland forests through field learning of nature and wildlife
- 3) Response to the theme of World Wetlands Day 2012 – Wetlands and Tourism.
- 4) Encourage field education which is an effective learning process that receives far less attention compare to classroom lecture.

**Organizer:** Water Watch Penang

- Wong Yun Yun (instructor)
- Ng Hong Jing (volunteer and photographer)

**Co-Organizer:** 1) Eco- Peace Leadership Centre

- 2) Yuhan-Kimberly

**Participant:** SJK(C) True Light

- Ong Saw Hoon (group leader)

**Supporting organization:** 1) Ramsar Secretariat

- 2) Mangroves for the Future (MFF)
- 3) SJK(C) True Light
- 4) KDU College

## **Programme Schedule:**

8.00 am – registration and briefing

8.30 am – departure to Kuala Sg. Pulau Betong

9.00 am – visiting mangrove wetland

- introduction of mangroves
- exploration of flora and fauna
- beach cleanup

11.00 am – visiting fishing village

11.30 am – lunch

1.00 pm – departure to Kampung Ku Art Gallery and Guesthouse

1.30 pm – indoor activities

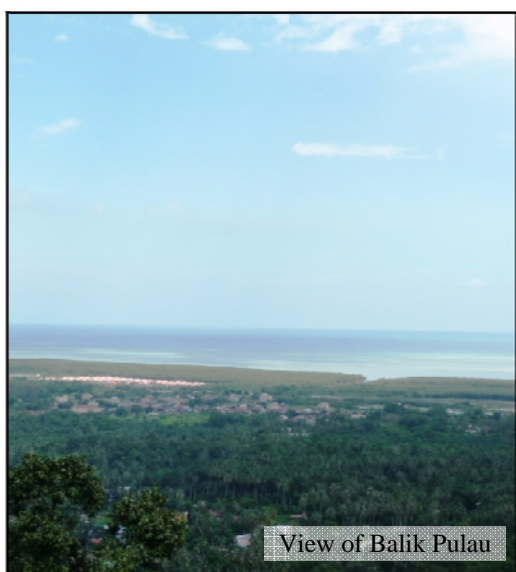
- sharing session
- artwork session

3.00 pm – closing ceremony

3.30 pm – group photo and dismiss

## Flow of Activity:

World Wetlands Day 2012 was celebrated by the Malaysian environmental NGO, Water Watch Penang (WWP) under a partnership programme with Eco- Peace Leadership Centre (UNEP-EPLC), namely “Nature Classroom – Forest, Water and Us”. The main objective of this “Nature Classroom” project is to create public awareness on water and forest conservations through educational visits to the mangrove wetlands in Balik Pulau, Penang.



For celebrating World Wetlands Day or WWD with the international theme of “Wetlands and Tourism”, SJK(C) True Light, a primary school at Juru was invited to join a field trip of “Nature Classroom” on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2012. “Let’s Go to See Mangroves!” was the purpose and also the theme of this special visiting tour. There were 20 participants from SJK(C) True Light included teachers, students and parents.

Early in the morning of the event day, the group arrived at Anjung Indah, which is a hilltop point for great view of Balik Pulau. After registration with the participants, a short briefing session was conducted by the instructor from WWP, Ms. Wong Yun Yun. She introduced the organizer WWP, the UNEP-EPLC’s project “Nature Classroom” as well as the celebration of WWD. Then, the group set off to the Balik Pulau Mangrove Forest Reserve.





The participants visited the coastal mangrove area which located around Kuala Pulau Betong or Pulau Betong river mouth. With the guidance of Ms. Wong, they were exposed to various plant and animal species that possess unique behaviours and characteristics as their adaptations to harsh intertidal environment.



Story of viviparous mangrove seeds



Different types of dispersing seeds

Both adults and kids showed much curiosity in learning the coastal animals and plants. They observed everything carefully and took a lot of photos as souvenirs! While exploring the local biodiversity, the importance of mangrove forests in ecological, physical and economical aspects was highlighted.



Fun learning



Curiosity



Serious observation





some fascinating flora and fauna found in the mangrove site



65 years old (oldest) and 3 years old (youngest) participants on work

The participants had seen all kinds of marine debris stranded along the shore during the guided tour. Thus, after enjoying the nature beauty, it was time to do some cleaning job. Every participant, no matter young or old, was dedicated to clean up the beach. Lots of non bio-degradable garbage such as plastic bags, fish nets and food packaging were found within mangrove tree roots (pneumatophores). As a result of the hard work, the participants have successfully collected 26 kg rubbish from the shore.



Collecting rubbish from *Avicennia* tree's aerial roots



Victory!

All rubbish were brought out of the visiting area and then disposed properly at the dumping site of Pulau Betong fishing village. At this time, everyone was tiring that it was nice to have a leisure walk around this peaceful village. The scenery was exceptionally beautiful as some deciduous trees like sea almond and blind-your-eyes were turning red.



The group also visited a small temple worshipped by the Chinese locals whose livelihoods rely on sea resources. They believe that the patron deity can protect them to earn a living in the sea.

After a simple lunch at the village, the group headed to a nearby shrimp paste factory which is an icon of the local and traditional home industries. The friendly factory owner welcomed the participants and generously shared the making process of shrimp paste or “belacan”.

From the visit, they realized the important role of a healthy coastal ecosystem in providing fishery resources as food and daily income. Before leaving, it was the exciting shopping moment where some of the newly produced “belacan” were brought back by the participants.



Next destination was the Kampung Ku Art Gallery and Guesthouse where indoor activities would be conducted. Firstly, it was an idea sharing session where all the participants were required to give their thoughts and comments on the field visiting



experiences. The advices and suggestions provided would be very helpful to improve the upcoming events and the positive responses were very much encouraging!

Subsequently, it was a special activity of WWD celebration where the participants were provided with some materials (selected from the Ramsar Secretariat's



Sharing of ideas

activity package of WWD 2011) to make their own dragonfly masks in a creative way. It was great to see all participants had fun with their handicraft. Both the adults and kids had good interactions through this interesting activity.



Colouring



Dragonfly in process

The outcome was surprisingly good since most of the dragonfly masks looked colourful and attractive. They had done it very well indeed.



Dragonfly princesses



Wonderful artwork

Completion of the art work marked the end of the activity. In the closing ceremony, a certificate was presented to the representative of SJK(C) True Light, Mdm. Ong Saw Hoon. Besides, a copy of the children book "Mangroves: Soldiers of Our Coasts" which published by Mangroves for the Future (MFF), was donated to the

library of SJK(C) True Light. By this way, not only the participants of “Nature Classroom”, but all the students of SJK(C) True Light have the chance to borrow the book for fun learning of mangroves.



As a token of appreciation, all the participants were given small gifts that contributed by KDU College. In return, Mdm. Ong represented her school to make a donation of their handicrafts to “Nature Classroom”. The handicrafts were mostly made of recycled materials and it would be a meaningful gift to other participants of “Nature Classroom”.

After taking group photo, the participants left happily with their lovely dragonfly masks on faces as if they have turned into real dragonflies! It was hoping that these beautiful “dragonflies” would pass the message of caring our wetland forests to family, friends and people around them.

### **Acknowledgement:**

Special thanks to Mdm. Ong Saw Hoon and Mr. Tung Him Soon for contribution of their photos

### **Prepared by:**

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